

Theology vol. 68.

A N

A P O L O G Y

FOR THE

Present Church of *England*

As, by L A W Established,

OCCASIONED BY A

P E T I T I O N

L A I D B E F O R E

P A R L I A M E N T,

F O R

Abolishing Subscriptions,

In a LETTER to one of the PETITIONERS.

The SECOND EDITION, corrected.

By J O S I A H T U C K E R, D. D.
D E A N of G L O C E S T E R.

G L O C E S T E R:

P R I N T E D B Y R. R A I K E S.

M. DCC. LXXII.

A P O L O G Y

Prison Church of England

As it is now

P E T I T I O N



P A R L I A M E N T

Addressing the

House of Commons

in relation to

the state of the

Prison Church of England

and the

Prison Church of England

and the

Prison Church of England

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T O T H E

SECOND EDITION.

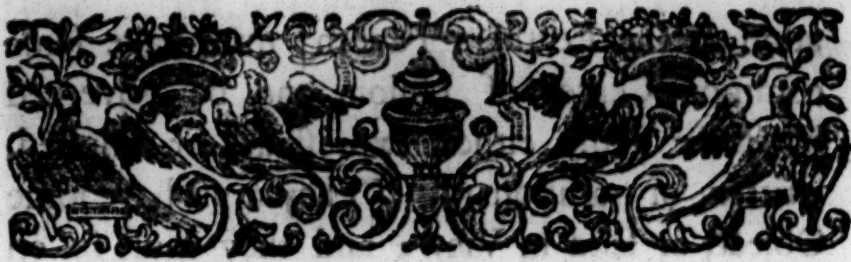
THE few Words inclosed between Crotchets are added in this Edition of the Apology, in order to obviate the Cavils, and to detect the Falsifications of a nameless Writer, who, because he found the Arguments too strong to be attacked in an open and direct Manner, chose to alter, disguise, and misrepresent them; and then to combat with a Phantom of his own raising. A Forgery so palpable is the more extraordinary, as the Man pretends to be a most strenuous Advocate for the pure Word of God, freed from all human Mixtures, and Adulterations. Surely the pure Word of God forbids the bearing of False Witness; surely it enjoins the Duty of doing to others as one would be done by. But I forbear:—By their Fruits ye shall know them.

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TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE first Edition of this
Catechism was published in the Month
of the Spring, in order to answer the
Calls, and to assist the Professors of a
rational Faith, who, being in want of
argument, are obliged to be satisfied in an
open and free Manner, that it is not
false, and unscriptural, and that it is
consistent with a Philosophy of the most
A. P. is published in the most
liberal, as the most rational, and
sound Abandon for the good of the
world from all human passions, and
ambitions. Though the first Edition of this
work, the bearing of the W. is, I think,
against the Duty of being so strict as one
would be bound by. But I believe — By
this Treatise we shall understand.



A N
A P O L O G Y
FOR THE

Present Church of *England*, &c.

REVEREND SIR,



S perhaps you, and I may differ widely in our Conclusions, I am the more desirous, that we should agree on certain Points at first setting out. To this End I have selected two Postulata to begin my Letter, which I hope, and believe you will not controvert.

My first is, That all Societies [whatsoever, not excepting the Bill of Rights, and the Associ-

ation at the Feathers Tavern] must have some common Center of Union, and be governed by some Rule either expressed, or implied, written, or traditionary. [They must have some Object, or End in View; and they must fix on some Means or other for the attaining of this End.]

AND the second, That those Persons, who are admitted Members of such Societies, and more especially those who propose themselves to be Candidates for Offices, and honourable Distinctions in the same; [for instance, that of President, Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, &c. &c. &c.] are to be supposed to approve of this Rule in the Main, and this Center of Union, whatever it may happen to be.

FROM both which Postulata I am led to infer, That the more important the Ends and Uses of any Society are supposed to be, the sooner, generally speaking, will such an Institution arrive at an Acquisition of temporal Possessions.---I say, this is an Inference, which seems to be a natural, and necessary Corollary from the foregoing Postulata. For divers Persons, either in their Life-time, or at their Decease, will think it expedient, out of a Principle of Zeal, of Emulation, or perhaps from less laudable Motives, to subscribe Sums of Money, or to give Lands, or leave Legacies for the Support, and Encouragement of such an important Institution

tution. Nor is it in the Power of the Civil Magistrate, even where he disapproves of these Benefactions, totally to prevent them. Indeed a continued Persecution may go a great Way towards stopping the Current of such Donations, or Bequests ;--I say, a *continued* Persecution; for an occasional one will rather promote, than restrain them, by inflaming the Zeal of the Persecuted, and by raising the Sensations of Pity in the Breasts of other Men. Also a very strict Law of Mortmain may obstruct the Disposal of Lands for such Uses, or may take away those Estates that are already given.

BUT after all, Ways and Means will be found out in a Course of Years, if Zeal should continue strong, and if Numbers encrease, and Wealth be not wanting, to compass the End intended to a great Degree. Moreover, in all free Countries, where the People are governed by known and established Laws, it is morally impossible to prevent the Subject from disposing of his Property, as his Judgement, and Conscience shall direct. For as he previously knows what the Laws in being are, and as he has no just Reason to think, that the State will enact a particular Law *ex post facto*, meerly to disannul what he shall wish to have done,—he has no other Difficulty to encounter, than that of eluding the Letter of the general prohibitory

bitory Law, by some oblique Method of Procedure. And in all Countries, the expert Practitioners in the Law will supply him with a sufficient Number of elusory Forms.

HENCE therefore it is evident, that civil Establishments may be formed without the Intervention of the Legislature ;---I had almost said, contrary to their known Judgement, but certainly without their express Consent, and even without Letters Patent of Incorporation. For to go no farther for Proofs, almost all the modern Hospitals and Infirmaries are thus established. And were we to examine the Ecclesiastical History of various Countries, more especially of our own, we should find, that divers Establishments have taken Place for the Support of divers Sects at a Time when the Legislature gave no Manner of Encouragement to such Institutions. Particularly it is observable, that during the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, and of the *Stuarts*, the Dissenters in general laboured under grievous Persecutions:---And yet that Circumstance did not hinder them from establishing considerable Funds for the Support of those Ministers, who suffered for Conscience-Sake. Again: Such dissenting Congregations, whose Pastors do not subscribe at present to Thirty-six out of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and likewise to a Part of the Twentieth,---That is, who do not submit to the
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the Terms required by the Act of Toleration,---are still liable to the same penal Laws, which were enacted during the persecuting Reigns of the *Tudors*, and of the *Stuarts*. And the non-subscribing Ministers are more in Number than the Subscribers, by at least three to one. Yet any Bequest is as valid to the former of these, as to the latter: Nor will the Trustees for the annual Interest of Sums of Money, or for the Rent of Lands, given before the Commencement of the last Mortmain Act, find any Difficulty in collecting the respective Revenues, on account of the Omission of Subscribing;---or of applying them afterwards, as Stipends for the Maintenance of such Non-conforming Ministers.

It is therefore a strange Dispute, to say no worse, which hath often been raised, and which some of your Friends have lately revived with great Warmth, about the Grounds and Reasons of religious Establishments;---Or, in other Words, about the Reasonableness, or Expediency of assigning any Funds of temporal Possessions for the Support of a Church. For all religious Sects in a Land of Liberty, will, in Process of Time, naturally and necessarily establish themselves, in Proportion to their Zeal, their Numbers, and their Abilities. Nor can this be avoided without a total Destruction of that Liberty, of which

we so often make our Boast. Indeed one Sect may get the Lead, either thro' its own intrinsic Merit, the superior Zeal, the Numbers, or Rank of its Votaries, or thro' the Favour of Government, and the Influence of the ruling Powers. But all the Sects (except perhaps the Quakers, if even they are to be excepted) will have this in common with it; That their Ministers and Pastors are to be supported either by the voluntary Contributions of the Living, by the Legacies of the Dead, or by both together. And therefore the whole Difference between each of these Sects and the leading Society, as far as the present Point is concerned, amounts to no more than this, *viz.* That the leading Sect has larger Appointments, and more permanent Donations, generally speaking, than the others have. Nay further, those permanent Donations which arise from the Profits of Lands, or Houses, were originally no other than private Benefactions. For even Tithes themselves, which now may be considered as a public, and a national Tax, were at first the mere private Gifts of Individuals;---The Proprietors of Lands, and Lords of Manors, some sooner, and some later, having given in Perpetuity the tenth Part of the Produce of their Grounds, and the Increase of their Flocks, &c. to the Support, and Maintenance of a parochial Ministry. So that in Fact, the present compulsory Laws for the
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Payment of Tithes, are of the same Nature as those for the Payment of Rent;---Tithes being nothing more than a Rent-Charge upon an Estate made by him, who was the Owner of it. And when some of these Tithe-Revenues actually escheated (and indeed all of them might be considered as escheated) to the Crown, (that is to the Public represented by the Crown) by the Downfal and Abolition of Popery, a great Part of them were afterwards regranted, in Effect, for the Support and Establishment of a Protestant Church of *England*.

BUT this is not all:---For you know, Sir, it hath been further advanced by some of your Friends,---That no one religious Sect ought to be established in Preference to another. Now, if this means any thing, it must be this:---Either that no Gift whatever, temporary or permanent, should be made to that Society, which hath the Promotion of Religion and Virtue for its End and Object; and that, in order to prevent such Gifts being made, all Societies *of this Kind* shall be subject to perpetual Persecution:---Or else, if any Individual should have Zeal enough to make a Donation to one of these religious Societies, other Individuals must be found out, or, if they cannot be found, the Public itself must make it up to all the rest;---that the Parity of Rank, and Equality of Condition may be still preserved among

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them

them, and that the dreaded Ascendency of one over the rest may be prevented: Now, whether the Impiety and Cruelty of the former of these Notions,---or the Absurdity of the latter, is the greater, is hard to say. But suffice it to observe, That they are both as irrational in Theory, as impracticable in Fact.

NOR will it mend the Matter to alledge, that too much may be bestowed upon these religious Institutions:---And particularly, that the Quantity of Land may be so great, as to cause Inconveniencies to Commerce, and even Dangers to the State. For tho' all this may be true, yet it is a Truth that doth not affect a religious Society merely *as such*: Because the like Charge may be brought against Lands or Houses given in Mortmain to any other Society, Civil, Military, or Literary, as well as to Religious,---*if given to Excess*. And therefore the Extent or Grandeur of the Establishment is a distinct Consideration, and entirely out of the present Question. Indeed it must be allowed, that all such Endowments may possibly, in Time, become excessive. But then it ought to be observed, that every State hath an effectual Cure for the past, and a preventive Remedy for the future in its own Hands, to be applied as Occasion shall require.

HOWEVER, as I now stand upon that very Spot of Ground, which the Adversary fancies
to

to be in a Manner his own, and from whence he thinks he can make his Attacks with the greatest Success; I will give him every Advantage he wishes to enjoy;---and yet will not decline the Combat. First therefore, I do assert, that as the establishing of Religious Societies is unavoidable in one Degree, or other, it becomes the Duty of the public Magistrate to give the Preference to that Society, which upon Comparison with others, shall appear to his own Judgement and Conscience to be the best, and most deserving;---and consequently the fittest to assist him in the Administration of a rational, equal, and just Plan of civil Government. Secondly, it is both his Duty and his Interest to support and encourage the Ministers of it to a *certain* Degree:---That is, to such a Degree *only* as shall elevate them above the Contempt of the Vulgar, without exciting the Envy of the Great. And Thirdly, as to all those other Sects, or Parties in Religion, which may happen to exist within the Boundaries of his State, it is most certainly his Duty, and evidently his Interest, to tolerate and protect them all, as far as a Regard to good Morals, and the Safety of the State can possibly admit. In Respect to which latter Circumstance, *viz.* the *Safety of the State*, I cannot but declare my entire Approbation of that generous Sentiment, which I have somewhere read in the Writings (for I quote only

from Memory) of the late learned Doctor *Doddridge*, of *Northampton*, to this Effect,—That in deducing bad, or dangerous Consequences from the irrational Tenets of any Sect, the Magistrate ought to make great Allowance, and not to proceed from Principle to Consequence by a Chain of Syllogisms; for few Sectaries, if any, will allow, or even believe, that such dangerous Conclusions can be drawn from their Principles as others draw: And therefore, as they do not see those Evils which are objected to their System, they ought not to be personally charged with them. Nay more, granting that they did see, and acknowledge such strange Consequences, yet as the very Absurdity of those Tenets would blast their Reputation, and soon prove their Ruin;—it would, perhaps, be better upon the whole for the Magistrate to permit these Reveries to die their own natural Death, than to put them to a violent one: And it would be Time enough for him to draw the Sword of Justice against the Defenders of such Notions, when some Insurrection, or public Disturbance should actually arise from them.

Now such a Conduct is generous and wise, as well as benevolent; keeping a due Medium between a Spirit of Bigotry and Persecution on the one Hand, and the Indifference of a Sceptic on the other.

WHEREAS

WHEREAS to suppose, that the civil Magistrate either is, or ought to be totally devoid of all religious Sentiments, neither entertaining any Fear of God, nor any Hopes of his Favour;---and therefore that such a Governor ought to act, as if no religious System whatever was worth protecting, much less encouraging, ---is at least to suppose, that he ought to be a very bad Man, in order to be a good Governor. A Paradox this, which even in an Age very fruitful of strange Conceits, will hardly be able to pass upon the World. But indeed, if we could even suppose, that this new-fangled civil Magistrate was just as devoid of all moral and religious Principles, as some Men would wish him to be, it doth not follow, that he would be so totally indifferent in Regard to the Support, or Encouragement, which might be given to one Sect in Preference to another, as they expect. For after all, there are two other Motives, besides Conscience, which may powerfully influence his Conduct in this Respect, *viz.* Interest, and Fancy. It may be his *Interest* to promote one Sect preferably to another, upon various Accounts, some of a public, and others of a private Nature. And his *Fancy* also may sway him to shew a Partiality to some one particular Sect, and to make that his *Favourite*. So that upon the whole, they who wish to see a Magistrate without any Religion, in order
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that no religious Sect might be established, would get but a little Way forward, even if they could obtain this Point ;---unless they could divest him likewise of every Sense and Feeling arising from his own Inclination, or his own Interest.

AND now, Sir, as, I hope, you will allow, that we have sufficiently discussed the Point relating to *Church-Revenues*, or *Church-Establishments* ;--- Let us proceed to another, *viz.* to the Consideration of that Postulatum, with which we first set out, *viz.* " That all Societies must
 " have some common Center of Union, and
 " must be governed by some Rule either expressed or implied, written or traditionary."
 [They must have some Object or End in View; and they must fix on some Means or other for the attaining of this End.]
 And I cannot see, as I told you at the Beginning, how you can possibly deny this Maxim. For a Society without any Rule, any Connection, or any social Bond, [without any End or Object, or without any Means to obtain it,] is, to my Apprehension, no Society at all. And yet, if you admit of such Regulations, you must likewise admit of Creeds, Articles, and Subscriptions, under some Shape or other, or of something equivalent to them. For these are nothing else but so many Rules of Conduct, and Centers of Union.

BUT

BUT perhaps, you will say,---and according to my poor Judgement, it is the only Thing you can say, that you do not mean to object to all Creeds, or to all Systems of Confession, but only to some particular ones. Well, then, if this be the Case, tell us plainly, and without Equivocation, what are those Principles, to which you have no Objection. Sum them up, and reduce them into Order; so that at last we may have such a Creed, or such a System of Faith and Doctrines, conceived in *positive*, not in *negative* Terms, as you yourself do avow, and will defend. Will you, for Example, be *explicit* on the fundamental Principles of natural Religion, and on the distinguishing Articles of Revelation? Or will you still entrench yourself under the Cover of general Assertions, without explaining, or particularizing any Thing? If this latter be your Aim, it will amount to the same Thing, in the Judgement of all discerning Persons, as if you had confessed, either that you had no Principles at all, or else, that they were of such a Sort, as you did not wish to have discovered, even in this Land of Liberty.

PUT therefore the Case, that you chuse to form a Church, or religious Society, on the Principles of natural Religion *only*: I ask what Human Creed, or what System of Faith would you wish to adopt on that Occasion?---

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To say that every Person, who was to teach, or preside in that Assembly, should engage, *to teach nothing but what appeared to him to be true, and agreeable to right Reason*, (which Words you know are a Parody on a favourite Expression of yours relative to the Scriptures) is saying nothing to the Purpose: For all the different Sects that ever were, or ever will be in the World, might equally become the Members, and some of them even the Pastors of such a comprehensive, latitudinarian Church. Nay, there is nothing in the Terms of this Engagement, which could exclude even an Atheist from inculcating his atheistical Doctrines publicly in this religious Assembly; for even he could subscribe to the Terms that were required, as unfeignedly as the rest, *viz.* That he would teach nothing but what appeared to him to be true, and agreeable to right Reason.

It is therefore at least so far certain, that we must advance one Step higher, and require an explicit Declaration of the Belief of a God. But here again, unless it be believed, that this God is a Presider over human Affairs, and a Rewarder of those that diligently seek him, it will be to no Purpose to require any Declaration concerning his physical Existence. For a God without Care, or Concern for Religion and Virtue, who neither justifies the Righteous, nor condemns the Wicked, is, in a religious Sense, no God at all.

THERE-

THEREFORE two Points at least must be admitted into the Creed of natural Religion, *viz.* That there is a God,---and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. But this Doctrine must lead still further, for these two Points immediately beget two others,—First, in what Manner, and by what Means are we to seek this rewarding God? And Secondly, at what Time, or in which State of our Existence are we to believe, that he will actually, and finally reward those, who diligently seek his Favour, and Protection in the Manner they ought to seek them?

IN Respect to the first Head, there is a Necessity that the Creed should be very explicit, because various, contradictory, and most irrational have frequently been the Methods of seeking to please the Creator of the World, and the Governor of Mankind. Nay, the popular Religions of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, of the *Syrians*, *Egyptians*, the *Medes* and *Persians*, and of all the Nations of Antiquity, excepting the *Jews*, were not only very foolish and absurd, but also abominably wicked and immoral. And the very best religious Systems of the *Gentiles* of this Day, throughout every Part of the Globe, are so unworthy of a rational Service either for God to require, or Man to pay, and have so little of true Repentance,

and Amendment of Life in their Composition, that one may venture to pronounce, there is a more excellent Way of gaining the Divine Favour, than ever was, or is to be found, among all the Nations of the *Gentile* World.

MOREOVER, if there be a Supreme Being,---the Rewarder of those who diligently seek him;---and if we are to seek his Favour and Reconciliation in a proper Manner, by displaying his Glory, and by diffusing Peace on Earth, and Good-Will among his Creatures, (which I take for granted is the Case) then the Creed of Nature is not so extremely short and concise, as some Persons have chosen to represent it. But lengthened as it is, it ends not here: For in the next Place we are to enquire, when, or at what Period of our Existence, is this Reward to take Place?---A certain Fact it is, according to the most accurate Observations both of antient, and modern Times, that the present Scene of Things is not the Scene for complete and adequate Distribution. Therefore there must be a future State to settle and adjust the present manifest Inequalities.

THUS at last, we have come to four general Points in the Creed of Nature, *viz.* The Belief of a GOD,---of a Providence,---of the Difference between Good and Evil,---and of a future State of Retribution. I call these *general Points,*

Points, because they must belong universally to all Churches founded, or supposed to be founded, on the Basis of natural Religion.

BUT farther still :---Each of these general Points may, and must be divided, and subdivided into particular ones, if Occasion shall so require. Thus for Example; suppose some wrong-headed metaphysical Genius should start an Opinion of the Self-existence of two sovereign, almighty, and independent Principles, the one the Author of all Good, and the other of all Evil, in the World :- -And that this conceited Genius, being likewise a most consequential Reasoner, should maintain, That we must worship the Good Being out of *Love*, and therefore do all the Good we can to please him ;---but that we must worship the Evil Being through *Fear*, and strive to please him also by a quite contrary Behaviour. Now I ask, Sir, will that general Persuasion of the Belief of a God, be a sufficient Test in such a Case as this ?---Surely no : And yet this very Case, *viz.* The Notion of two almighty, independent Principles, the one good, and the other evil, hath more than once prevailed a great deal both in the Heathen, and in the Christian World. Much more might be added to the same Effect concerning the Nature, and the Laws of Providence,---of moral Obligation,---and of a future State :---But I forbear. You, and the rest of

my learned Readers, know too well, that I may procure Materials more than enough to furnish long Differtations on each of these Articles : And as to the unlearned, they need not be informed of all the nonsensical, or all the mischievous Opinions, that from Time to Time have found too much Encouragement from the Corruptions, Passions, Conceitedness, and Blindness of human Nature.

WHEREFORE the whole that I have to say on the present Subject may thus be briefly summed up ; That even according to the Principles of natural Religion, there must be a Creed, or Confession of Faith, either openly declared, or tacitly implied ;---and that this Creed must consist of at least four general Articles ;---moreover that certain extraordinary Occasions may occur, when each of these must be divided, and subdivided into others :---So that in Fact the same Creed of natural Religion becomes either shorter, or longer, as Circumstances shall vary. In Times of great Simplicity, or after the Metaphysical Fallacies of former Ages are happily forgot, the shorter this Creed in Reason, so much the better. But when the Sophistry and Chicane of wrangling Disputants, or of perverse, conceited Philosophers, have rendered ineffectual this short and comprehensive Creed, Recourse must then be had to farther Explanations, and
more

more exact Definitions. Just as later Acts of Parliament are made to explain, strengthen, and enforce the preceding;---after the Frauds, and Juggles, and Impositions of dishonest, crafty Men have eluded the plain Meaning and Intention of the original Law.

COME we now therefore to consider the Case of the Gospel.---And what is there in the whole System of Revelation, that either forbids, or discountenances the Ule of Creeds, and Confessions of Faith? Nay, how comes it pass, that *that* Method for the Prevention of Error, which is so plainly a *Duty*, according to the best Light of Nature, is converted into a *Crime*, if practised under the Dispensation of the Gospel? And is it thus, after all, that you shew your peculiar Regard to the Duties of natural, and perpetual Obligation? Or, that you wish to reconcile the Declarations of Holy Writ with the Dictates of right Reason? Both Reason and Revelation cry aloud, that we must contend earnestly for the Faith:---For the Faith of natural Religion in the one Case, and of both natural and revealed in the other. Nay more, the Commands of Scripture plainly refer to some certain Compendium of the Gospel, that is, to some particular Creed, or Confession of Faith, whatever it was, *which was once delivered to the Saints*. For evident it is, that when Saint *Jude* used these
Words,

Words, *the Faith delivered to the Saints*, he could not possibly mean the Gospel at large, or all the Books of the New Testament; I say, evident it is, as for other Reasons, so particularly for the four following, 1st. Because all the Books of the New Testament were not then compiled when he wrote his Epistle: 2^{dly}. Because, some of those, which were indeed then extant, were not universally admitted at that Time into the Canon of the New Testament: And, 3^{dly}. Because it cannot be supposed, that when the Apostles and first Missionaries preached the Gospel in different Parts of the Earth, and fled from City to City, they carried Numbers of Copies along with them of all the Manuscript Books then in being, and left a Copy at each Place, where they stopped, and made Converts: Nay, 4^{thly}. Granting, for Argument's Sake, that they even did this (which is by no Means probable) it is *absolutely incredible*, that they delivered a Manuscript Copy to each Profelyte, when Transcribing was so tedious, when Manuscripts were so excessively dear, and the Art of Printing not discovered;---or that each Profelyte could have been able to read the Writing, had it been delivered.---Therefore the only practicable Method left them to pursue, was that which the Apostle tells us, they did pursue, *viz.* To instruct their Converts in the general Principles of the Christian Religion, and to teach them a Compendium

pendium of the Christian Faith: Which Compendium is only another Name for a *Creed*.

“ BUT Creeds, you say, especially *modern*
 “ Creeds, are composed by fallible Men; whereas
 “ the Scriptures are the Words of the infallible
 “ God.”---Granted: But the original Scriptures
 themselves were transcribed by antient fallible
 Copyists; and they are now printed by modern
 and fallible Printers. They were likewise trans-
 lated by modern and fallible Translators: This
 Translation was enjoined to be publicly used by
 a modern and fallible Authority; and the several
 Copies of it now in Use were printed by a Set of
 Printers still more modern, and not one Jot
 more infallible. So that if Fallibility alone
 (for we are not here discussing the different De-
 grees of Fallibility, to which different Cases
 may be subject) but if mere Fallibility,---or, if
 you please, * if the *bare Possibility of making a*
 D *Mistake,*

* The true Distinction to be made between Scriptures, and Creeds in this Case is the following, *viz.* The Scriptures are infallible in their Source, but fallible in their Descent; that is, the several Copyists, Editors, Translators, and Interpreters of them may make Mistakes. Whereas Creeds are fallible both in their Source, and in their Descent: But absolute Infallibility, in the Sense above explained, belong to neither: Nor is this Distinction applicable to the Case of Revelation only. For the very same Distinction ought always to be made between *perfect* Reason

Mistake, is to be deemed a sufficient Reason for rejecting the Use of Creeds;---it will then necessarily follow, that both the original *Greek*, and *Hebrew* Scriptures, and the several Translations of them must be rejected likewise. And the Objection will never cease, 'till it hath ended either in universal Scepticism on one Extreme, or an infallible Pope on the other.

BESIDES;---permit me to ask, is the Creed, or Confession of Faith, to which you object, because composed by fallible Men; (whatever it be)---is it true, or false in itself? If it be true, it contains a Scripture-Meaning, upon a Supposition, that the Scriptures are the Truth of God;---tho' perhaps the very identical Phrases are not to be found in the Scripture. But on the other Hand, if you can prove it to be false, and contrary to Scripture;---what Need of further Controversy? For we are both agreed, that a false, or an unscriptural Creed is not to be defended. Once more, suppose, that a Creed was composed of

as subsisting in the Divine Mind, and the *imperfect* Portions of it, which are from thence derived down to us. In one Word, the Imperfections of our present State are the Lot of human Nature: And it is every Man's Duty to make the best of his Condition, and improve his own Talent, as much as he can, without expecting Impossibilities.

and

and expressed altogether in Scripture Language ;
 ---but that these Words and Phrases were per-
 verted from the true and genuine Scripture-
 Meaning ;---which Circumstance, you will allow
 at least to be *possible* :---Is the Creed a Whit
 the better, or the more Scriptural on that Ac-
 count ? And must this Angel of Darkness be
 received by us as an Angel of Light, merely be-
 cause of his hypocritical Garb, and deceitful
 Appearance ? Surely, no : For the Doctrine
 is false, and the Sense must be bad and impi-
 ous, tho' the Words and Phrases may carry
 a seeming good, and pious Sound.

HOWEVER, you will here, I know, reply,
 “ I have a Right to follow the Dictates of my
 “ own Judgment, without being controuled
 “ by any Man. And therefore, if you require
 “ such Terms of Communion from me, as you
 “ know I ought not in Conscience to comply
 “ with, you are guilty of an Injury done to me in
 “ particular, and you attempt to invade the
 “ general Rights of other Christians : You fall
 “ off from the great Protestant Principle of
 “ Liberty of Conscience ; and you relapse
 “ into one of the very worst Stages of Popish
 “ Disorders.”

NAY, but O Man ! thou art inexcusable,
 whoever thou art that judgest, for wherein

thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself: For thou that judgest, dost the same Thing. The Rights of private Judgement are no exclusive Property; they belong not to thee alone, but are the common Privileges of all Mankind. Therefore do not maintain thine own Right in such a Manner, as shall be injurious to the Rights of other Men. Every Duty hath its proper Bounds and Limits: And it is impossible, that one *fundamental* Obligation should destroy, or annihilate another.

To make this important Case the plainer, let us have Recourse to the first Principles of Society, and to the great Out-lines of Human Conduct. Suppose therefore, that the *British* Islands were, what the Antients imagined them to be, a World within themselves; and that the Inhabitants were desirous of forming themselves into different religious Societies, according to their different Perswasions, and Modes of thinking: Let the given Number be about 10,000: * and let Half of these,

viz.

* A captious Disputant might here object, that this is supposing a Case, which hath never happened. I grant it: ---Nor was there ever a Time mentioned in History, when Mankind actually assembled together in Order to form the original civil Compact between Prince and People. And yet every Friend to rational Liberty, and every
Writer,

viz. 5,000 be supposed to be so happy, as to agree in their private Judgements and to co-incide in the Sense of those Parts of Scripture, which treat of the capital Doctrines of Christianity.---In Consequence of this Coalition of Judgments, and Junction of Opinions, their Leaders, and those in whom they repose most Confidence, form a Plan of Church-Government, fix on Articles of Belief, and Rules of Association, and reduce these Agreements into Writing, by the Consent, and with the Approbation of the rest. Others, who do not approve the Terms of this Union, and think differently from the main Body, form smaller Societies on different Plans: And some few, perhaps, not satisfied with those already existing, will neither enter into such as are already formed, nor yet form new ones of their own, but chuse to remain in a

Writer on the Nature of a free and limited Government deduces all his Arguments from this very Principle of a social Compact being entered into between the Governors, and Governed. Just so, a Church, or religious Society, may be supposed to be formed: And whether the Individuals originally met together to form this Association, and to build up one another in their holy Faith;---or whether they were gradually converted by the Preaching of others, acquiesced in, and approved of that Form of Church Government, and those Articles of Belief, Rules, and Liturgies, which they found ready to their Hands,---*the Consequence is just the same.*

Kind of Neutrality, and Independence. The Sect which is most numerous, and wealthy, *viz.* the 5,000, can afford to give its Officers, and Ministers larger Salaries, and better Appointments, than the smaller Societies are able to do. This Circumstance becomes a Temptation to several, who do not in their Hearts approve of the Terms of the Union, (and perhaps would rejoice at the Destruction of it) to wish nevertheless to partake of its Emoluments. And therefore, some of these act the Part of Hypocrites, pretending to conform outwardly, tho' with inward Sentiments, and secret Desires very averse and hostile. Others again, endeavour to persuade the Members of this leading Society to alter their Plan, and to render it more conformable to what they think to be just, and right. The first of these, *viz.* the Hypocrites cannot be vindicated on any pretence whatever : And as to the second Class, if they can succeed by Means of Persuasion, and if they can convert the Majority to their own Opinion ; all is well, and fair.---But if not, what Right hath either Class to complain of this Association of the 5,000, as an Injury done to *them*, which, at the most is only the innocent Cause of a Misfortune attending their Case ?---They, the Minority, surely act most unreasonably in pouring forth any such Complaints ; because the great Society must have at least as good a Right to the Exercise

Exercise of their own private Judgement, as the lesser Society, or as a few scattered Individuals can have to theirs. And if in the Exercise of this Right, the 5,000, should dispose only of their own Property, according to the best of their Skill, and Judgement;---why must they be censured? Nay, ought they not to have been greatly, and deservedly censured, had they acted otherwise?

LET now the Plea of the Right of private Judgement have its full Force: And then tell me, on which Side doth it conclude the strongest? Surely no Man can hesitate: For the Question answers itself. Nor is there, in my humble Opinion, any Argument but one to be urged in Arrest of Judgement: And that is this, "That
 " in all Cases whatever, where Concessions may
 " be made with a safe Conscience, and without
 " Danger, there the Majority ought to make
 " them, for the Sake of removing a Stumbling-
 " Block out of the Way of a weak Brother:---
 " And moreover to give a convincing Proof,
 " that no Danger can attend the Alteration here
 " desired, viz. the abolishing Articles and Sub-
 " scriptions, the Case of the Church of Geneva
 " may be appealed to:---A Church, which hath,
 " for many Years past, removed all these Stum-
 " bling-Blocks, and Rocks of Offence, without
 " having experienced any Inconvenience what-
 " ever."

Now

Now, in answer to this Argument, which I know is thought to be unanswerable by some Persons, I shall beg Leave to observe, that the first Part of it is by no Means certain;---that another Part of it is not fairly stated;---and that the last, *viz.* the Article of *Geneva* is not true.

It is by no Means clear and certain, that all the Concessions now required, and according to the strange Manner of requiring them, can be made without imminent Danger to the whole Ecclesiastical Constitution:---And to suppose the contrary, is to beg the Question, instead of proving it.

THEN as to the second Part, granting that weak Brethren on your Side ought to be gratified in these particular Cases, where Concessions may be *safely* and *innocently* made:---Yet surely a like Plea may be offered in Behalf of those weak Brethren on our Side (and many, very many such there are) who would tremble at the very Thoughts of making Innovations, tho' in Matters ever so slight, or ever so indifferent. And therefore, as there are weak Brethren on both Sides, what is to be done?---The Cause of Truth, I will allow, especially of weighty and important Truths, ought to be preferred to any other Consideration. But where that is not the

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Question; and where the whole is supposed to turn upon Matters of mere Complaisance, and Condescension, on which Side ought we to shew it?---Supposing us to be so unhappily situated, as not to be able to please both. This is a Difficulty, which very frequently occurs in Practice: And I leave it to your own Skill and Judgement in Casuistical Theology to give a Solution.

LASTLY, as to the Case of the Church of *Geneva*:---Without insisting on what Monsieur *D'Alembert* hath said on this Article,---which, if true, would be itself an irrefragable Objection against abolishing Subscriptions, after the *fatal Consequences* of such a Precedent:---But waving that odious Topic, which, I am persuaded, is very much exaggerated, if there be any Truth at all in it;---I will take another Course;---and when I have done, you are welcome to make the most of such an Example, if you can think it will be at all in your Favour.

By Way therefore of Preliminary, I would beg Leave to observe, that it doth not follow, that *that* System, which might comport well enough with the Circumstances of the little State of Geneva, would be proper for so large an Empire as the British. Small Societies have

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Ways

Ways and Means of keeping up Regularity and Order, and of enforcing Discipline, which are not practicable in greater Communities. *Geneva* itself furnishes a strong Instance of this kind; which I shall now mention. This Church hath indeed abolished Subscriptions, and Confessions of Faith in one Form, but she still retains them in another.---

FOR first, when the Candidates apply for Orders, they undergo a very rigorous Examination before the Consistory, that is, before the Professors and Pastors of the Republic. In which Examination two Points are more particularly insisted on, *viz.* First, whether they, the Candidates, will take the Holy Scriptures for their only Guide in Matters of Religion? And, secondly, Whether they understand these Scriptures in a sound and salutary Sense? That is, in such a Sense as the Professors and Pastors themselves believe to be Orthodox and true. For if any Sense whatever was to be admitted, provided the Candidates made a general Acknowledgment of the Truth and Sufficiency of the Scriptures, and of their Intentions of taking no other Guide,---why then any other Examination? And why all the Parade of such a public Trial, which is at last to answer,---No Purpose? Which therefore could neither recommend one
Can-

Candidate for his critical Skill and Learning, for his sound Judgement, and orthodox Belief; nor yet could exclude another for his Ignorance, his Insufficiency, his superstitious Conceits, his impious Heterodoxies, or his enthusiastic Rants.

THE next Step, which the Consistory takes, is to examine the Candidates in Ecclesiastical History. And the professed Intent of this Examination is, to give each Candidate an Opportunity of distinguishing the true Faith from the false, the Wheat from the Tares, and the sound Doctrines of the Gospel from the several Perversions of it, by pointing out the Heresies, and Corruptions, which have arisen in the Church from Time to Time. And that very able Divine, and excellent Professor, the younger *Turretin*, who was the principal Mover for the Abolition of Subscriptions, was likewise the first to furnish a Compendium of Ecclesiastical History for this very Purpose: As he himself tells us in his Preface.

NAY more, after the Candidates have answered to the Satisfaction of the Professors, and Pastors, both in Respect to the Scriptures, and Ecclesiastical History, they are called to give a further Proof, both of their present Orthodoxy, and of their Intentions in persevering

in it. For when the Ordination-Charge is given, the Professors, Pastors, and Candidates, are assembled in the Town-Hall, which is likewise crouded with other Auditors, and Spectators, as may be imagined, on that Occasion. And then the President for the Week interrogates them concerning their Intentions, and the Plan of their future Conduct, with Regard both to Doctrines and Morals, Faith and Practice. And at the End of each Interrogation, a solemn Pause being made, each Candidate is required to express his Approbation and Promise, by holding up his right Hand on high before this mixt Multitude.

LASTLY, they have other Guards, and Cautions against false Doctrines, which extend to the future Conduct of their Clergy; for they hold weekly Consistories, in which all Ecclesiastical Causes are heard, and determined in a speedy and summary Manner. And there is something in the Constitution of this little Republic, which greatly facilitates the Detection of Heterodox Opinions, when any of their Preachers shall attempt to broach them. For tho' their City is divided into Parishes, like ours, yet their parochial Ministers have no more to do with the Sunday's *public* Duty of their respective Parishes than any other Clergyman. And the Clergy themselves settle the

Lift

List of Preachers for the next Sunday, and the ensuing Week at these weekly Consistories: Which List being immediately printed off, and carried to each Householder throughout the Town, is hung up in some conspicuous Place of the House for all the Family to see. Consequently, if any Preacher should labour under the Suspicion of sowing Tares with the Wheat, the whole City have at once their Eyes upon him. And as every Person has a Right to inform against the DOGMATIZER (for that is the Term by which he is to be first accused) at the next Consistory-Day, the Matter will soon be brought to an Issue: And either an Acquittal,---a Recantation,---a Suspension,--- or Banishment from the Territories of the Republic, by Means of the Aid of the civil Magistrate, will probably take Place in the Course of a few Weeks.

Is this the new Plan, which you are so desirous of recommending instead of our own? And were all Articles, and Subscriptions to be abolished, what great Degree of Liberty would you gain, while so many Checks and Restraints on modern Free-thinking, and so many Guards and Cautions against propagating false Doctrines were substituted in their Place?

BUT further,---if the Case, and Circumstance of the Church of *Geneva* proves so little applicable to your Pretensions, can you point out a single Instance in their Favour? And do you know of any religious Congregation either at Home, or Abroad, and of any Denomination, where your Plan is practised to the full Extent of your Demand? Your Plan of the Rights of private Judgment, as far as I, and others, are able to understand it, is to the following Effect, *viz.*

“ THAT every Person may commence a
 “ Teacher, and Instructor of others, however
 “ ignorant or unqualified, however wild or heretodox in his Notions, provided he will
 “ but acknowledge the Truth, and Sufficiency of the Scriptures, and declare, that
 “ he intends to make them the sole Guide of
 “ his Study and Labours in the Ministerial
 “ Function:---And consequently, that every
 “ Individual, after having given this Assurance,
 “ and *this only*, shall be at full Liberty to interpret the Scriptures to his Audience in what
 “ Manner, and to preach what Doctrines soever
 “ he shall think best, without incurring any *judicial* Censure, or Reprimand from his Superiors, his Equals, or his Audience;---And that if
 “ he shall persist in propagating such Opinions,
 “ as either his Superiors, his Equals, or his Audience
 “ dience

“ dience shall judge to be dangerous, and contrary to the Truth, as it is in *Jesus*, he is nevertheless to be continued in his Office of a public Teacher, without Molestation, or Controul.” *

THIS, I say, appears to us to be your present Plan: And ’till you shall have shewn the contrary;---that is, ’till you shall have given us those Restrictions, and Limitations, which are to be incorporated with it;---’till you shall have shewn what Examinations your Candidates are to pass thro’ at first;---and what Restraints are to be laid upon them afterwards;---and lastly, ’till you shall have enumerated some of those Heresies, and false Doctrines, which you yourself will declare to be *not admissible* into your new-intended Church, we must conclude, that we have understood you rightly;---and that we have not, either thro’ Ignorance, or Design misrepresented your real Meaning.

THIS therefore being the Case, I will now ask, where, and in what Congregation doth this

* The Author finds himself to be here mistaken, as to the Terms *Molestation*, or *Controul*;---and therefore refers himself to his Postscript for an Explanation. The real Doctrine, and *practical Consequences* in both Cases amount to the same.

unbounded Latitude of interpreting the Scriptures actually take Place? And will you, for Example, make the first Experiment among a Congregation of Quakers;---who must be allowed to be as comprehensive as any. Will you therefore insist on the Use and Importance of the two Sacraments in their Meeting, or Place of Worship? This surely you might do with a sincere Conscience: And you might quote Texts of Scripture, not a few, in Confirmation of it. But were you to make this the constant Topic of your Discourse;---can you think that the Audience would express an equal Approbation of this Doctrine of yours, as of their own? Nay, can you yourself imagine, but that they would take some Course, sooner, or later to restrain you from Preaching at all among them? Doubtless they would. Nor are they to be blamed, while they continue to be of the Persuasion of Quakers, for acting according to their own Lights, and Consciences. For it is as much their Duty to make Use of their own Judgments, as it is for you to make Use of yours.

AGAIN, to come still closer to what may be your own Case---suppose your own Curate to be perverted to the Corruptions of the Church of *Rome*, will you grant him the Use of your Pulpit as freely as before? Answer this Question

tion on the Principles of a sound and zealous Christian, and a consistent Protestant. Your Answer would undoubtedly be, N O.---But permit me to ask, why not? For your perverted Curate will readily comply with every Condition, that you shall, or *can*, consistently with your own Principles, be able to require of him. He will, for Example, solemnly, and, for any Thing you can know to the contrary, most sincerely declare, "That he will teach nothing
" as essential to Salvation, but what shall ap-
" pear to him to be either expressly asserted,
" or to be plainly, fully, and strongly implied
" in the Gospel of *Christ*." And when you shall charge him with *rejecting* the Authority of Scripture, and with setting up oral Tradition, and the Authority of the Church either in Opposition, or in Preference to it, he will tell you that this is a gross Falshood, and a bare-faced Calumny invented by the Protestants to blacken the Catholicks. And he will refer you to the
* Remonstrance of the whole Body of the
F Clergy

* “ La Plainte de l'Assemblée generale du Clergé de France contre les *Calumnies, Injures, et Faussetés*, que les pretendus Reformées ont repandues, et repandent tous les jours dans leur Livres, et dans leur Prechés contre la Doctrine de l'Eglise.” And among many other Heads of (supposed) false Accusations, they particularly mention the following, “ Que nous (le Clergé) preferons les traditions a la Sainte Ecriture; que nous
“ leur

Clergy of *France*, made in the Year 1685, in Proof of this Assertion.

OR if you were to change your Attack, and say, that the Reason why you cannot admit him to preach any longer in your Pulpit is, because he sets up another Legislator in the Christian Church, *viz.* the Pope, besides the only true one, Jesus Christ the Righteous :---He will deny this Charge also, and defy you to prove it. He will say in regard to the Pope, that he absolutely denies his temporal Power; (and so doth the whole Gallican Church in their four famous Propositions of 1684) and that, in respect to his Spiritual Offices, he admits him to be a Legislator and Judge, in no other Sense, than as Christ's Vicar and Deputy, acting by express Commission received from him, and recorded in the Gospel in those emphatical Words, FEED MY SHEEP :---That therefore, in reverencing the Deputy, *whilst acting agreeably to the Powers of his Commission*, he is so far from rejecting the Authority of the Principal, that he thereby the more solemnly recognizes it. Now tho' you might

“ leur donnons plus d'Autorité, et qu'elle n'a d'Autorité que par elle.” I find, that this Remonstrance of the Gallican Church was translated into English from a Latin Copy, and published here in *England* a few Months after it had made its Appearance in *France*.

easily

easily have confuted this Interpretation of Scripture, had you proceeded on another Plan, yet you are precluded from doing it upon your own. For, right or wrong, if you cannot convince him of his Error, what else can you do? Will you deprive him of his Office on that account? If you act in that Manner, you contradict your own Principles, and deny him the Right of private Judgement.---But if you will continue him in it, you are certainly a bad Shepherd in knowingly and wilfully permitting the Wolf to devour the Flock of Christ.

LASTLY, Were you to have Recourse to another Argument for refusing him: That is, were you to alledge, that the Reason why you cannot tolerate Popery is, because Popery is an intolerant Religion, and will not tolerate you:---And that what you do in this Respect, is merely through a Principle of Self-preservation:---He will then reply, that you ought at least to permit him to preach such Doctrines in your Pulpit, as have no Tendency to, and no Connection with, a Spirit of Persecution:---And then he will urge that *Transubstantiation* itself is of this Kind;---a Doctrine which might stand by itself, unconnected with, and independant of, any other Part of Popery;---a Doctrine, which he doth not believe in Virtue of the Pope's Command, or the Decrees of the Church, but in Consequence of the

sole Authority of Scripture, *THIS IS MY BODY*. And a Doctrine, in short, which is embraced at this Day by those very Churches, which disclaim the Jurisdiction of the Pope; the Churches of *Greece* and *Russia*. Nay more, he may further add, that the Doctrine of *Consubstantiation* is the Doctrine of a *Protestant* Church, the very first in Point of Time, and the largest in respect to Extent of Country, *viz.* the *Lutheran*, which comprehends many Provinces in *Germany*, and all *Denmark*, and *Sweden*. And he might close the whole with observing, That the Difference between *Consubstantiation* and *Transubstantiation* is so very *imperceptible*, either as to *Sense*, or *Reason*, that he who maintains the one, might well be indulged to substitute the other. Now, Sir, how you will proceed further, or what other Methods you will take to silence this perverse Disputant, is your Concern to reflect upon.---But evident it is, that you have furnished him with unanswerable Arguments against yourself:---I mean, *unanswerable* on your Principles, not on mine.

THEREFORE, in fact, turn to which Side you please, either to that which you think to be the most favourable to your all-comprehensive Scheme of private Judgement:---Or, to that which is the most unfavourable,---numberless and unfurmountable Difficulties must for ever attend your Plan.

BUT

BUT what is still worse, were you to dissolve all the Bands of religious Societies this Moment,---the same Unions, and Coalitions, the same Combinations, and Affociations, or nearly the same, would soon be formed again. *Arians* would unite with *Arians* in Preference to others; and *Trinitarians* with *Trinitarians*: *Calvinists* would exclude *Arminians* from their Pulpits, as far as they could (and indeed much farther than they are able to do at present) and the *Arminians* would return the Compliment to the *Calvinists*: So that the Theological War would presently be kindled afresh, and blaze forth with more Fury than ever.

INDEED you may fondly imagine, that were all Enclosures to be thrown down, and every Boundary removed: and more especially were some kind Set of modern Patriots to destroy the present Church-Establishments, and to seize its Revenues to their own Use;---then all Controversies would cease of course, because the Temptations to Wrangling and Dispute would be taken away. But be assured, that the quite contrary Event would follow: For in such a Situation (as the World never was, and never will be without a Religion, and *Religions* of some Sort or other) every Sect, more especially every Leader of a Sect would struggle

hard to get uppermost ; because not only Ambition, and Vain-Glory, but also Self-Interest, and Self-Preservation would teach them this Lesson. Their very Subsistence, as well as the Desire of Importance, would excite them to encrease the Numbers, and enflame the Zeal of their own Party, and to depress the Adversary. And when all the Sects are thus struggling together for Glory, for Conquest, and even for Life itself ; one must at last prevail. And which, do you think is that, which is the likeliest to prove victorious?---Not that Sect, or Set of Preachers, who would recommend a Wisdom descending from above, pure and peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of Mercy and of good Works, without Partiality, and without Hypocrisy : Surely not the Teachers of Doctrines of such a Tendency as these ;---and in an Age, and Country, so licentious, and profligate as ours,---especially as they are destitute of the Power of working Miracles to prove a divine Commission :---But Men of a very different Stamp,---a Set of bold and daring Declaimers,---a Set of Ecclesiastical Fire-brands,---who being half Enthusiasts, and half Knaves themselves, could the more easily impose on the Credulity, and work up the Knavery of others ;---and who being possessed of the Gifts of popular Oratory,---and by chiming in with the Passions, the Prejudices, and even the Vices of the
giddy

giddy Multitude, could enflame them into Fury, and inspire them with an Enthusiasm, bordering upon Madness. These, these are the Men, who would necessarily prevail in such a Situation. And having once got the Ascendency, it cannot be imagined, that they would be in Haste to relinquish this Post of Preheminence. Indeed their Self-preservation, had they no other Motive, would oblige them both to continue, and to strengthen themselves in it; for they never could be safe, 'till they had crushed their Enemies, and laid them so low, as to render them incapable of future Opposition.—And therefore the Inference from the whole is this, that Anarchy in the Church is of the same Nature, and has the same Tendency, as Anarchy in the State. They both necessarily tend to despotic Power: And there they terminate.

WHEREAS nothing allays Heats and Divisions, or stops the Career of Envy, Jealousy, and Rancour, so much as giving one Church a national Preference without persecuting the rest. And then, if this leading and national Church should have any very gross and fundamental Errors belonging to it, it would in Time reform itself. This, I think, would unavoidably happen; because where Errors are so very palpable and absurd,---and where the national Church would be
 conti-

continually put in Mind of them, by the *Upbraidings* and *Triumphs* of the other Sects, who would not fail to make *this Use of their Liberty*; ---what else could ensue, but either its own Destruction, or Reformation? In short, it must either reform, or be deserted: And a *deserted* national Church would soon become a Non-Entity; for in such a Situation, its late numerous Friends, more especially among the Laity, having become its bitterest Enemies, (and Profelytes are always the most bitter) it could have no fresh Support, no Assistance, no Protection, no Credit, no new Alliances, no Converts! Add to all this, that its own rich Revenues would be a tempting Morfel to hasten its Downfall;---as was actually the Case here in *England, Scotland, Germany, &c. &c.* at the Time of the Reformation: So that it would become an easy Prey to the Invaders; and fall unpitied.

Now to strengthen this Argument, let us but suppose the Governments of *Spain* and *Italy* to tolerate the Protestant (or, if you rather please to say, to *establish* the Protestant) Religion to as great a Degree, as the Dissenters are tolerated, or * *established* here in *England*: And that there was likewise a reasonable Degree of Liberty

* See Dr. *Furneaux* against Judge *Blackstone*.

granted

granted to the Press;---what Consequences would follow from this two-fold Indulgence?--- And how would these corrupt national Churches be affected by such a Plan?---Surely we need not hesitate long for an Answer to this Question? For most undoubtedly either the national Churches of these States would agree upon a Reformation among themselves; or such Numbers would daily desert from them, such formidable Enemies would arise on every Side, and such Flaws and Cracks would be daily discovered in the old rotten Fabric, that when its Props, and Pillars, and Buttresses were taken away, it would fall to Pieces of itself. So that either Way, the Scene must necessarily be changed: And the greater Light would unavoidably chase away the grosser Darkness. Nay, this is visibly the Case in some Degree in *France* at this Time; for as the Protestants in that Kingdom are a good deal *connived* at, tho' not legally tolerated; and as the Affair of the Press is not under the Restraints of an Inquisition;---the Consequence is, that the Gallican Church rejects many Points, which are rigorously observed in *Spain* and *Italy*. And a Person, who might pass for a sound Catholic in *France*, (as hath been often remarked) would be accounted no better than an Heretic in either of those Countries.

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BUT when I speak of this Self-reformation taking Place in a national Church, where Liberty of Conscience is granted to other Persuasions, and where likewise the Press is not under the Restraints of an Inquisition, or of an *Impri-matur*, I mean only, as I said before, a Reformation from gross, palpable, and fundamental Errors. For as to smaller Matters, such as common Inaccuracies, little Defects, trifling Redundancies, or petty Incongruities;----I cannot see, that the national Church must be perpetually engaged in the Work of *reforming*, and *refining*, 'till every Person is agreed, that she can reform and refine no longer. And sure I am, that were we to apply the same Train of Reasoning to any other Institution, Civil, Military, Political, Literary, or Commercial, or to any other Affair whatever, carried on by *Men*, and not by *Angels*, there is not a Person living, who would scruple to concur in this Opinion. In short, *non ego paucis offendar maculis* is a good Rule in all Cases: And after all the Pretensions to Perfection, which visionary Theorists are apt to make, this is the only Rule that can be reduced to Practice.

I might now safely trust this Part of my Argument with every intelligent, and candid Reader,---did there not yet appear a Necessity
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of saying a Word, or two concerning the *Terms of Christian Communion*. For here alas! as in other Cases, it is a Misfortune, that the Words are so ambiguous in themselves, as to be very liable to be misunderstood,---being capable of a very extensive, or a very confined Signification, according to the Nature of the Case, to which they are applied.

If, for Example, by the *Terms of Christian Communion* is to be understood the Condition or Stipulation, agreeably to which one Society of Christians ought to acknowledge another to be Christians likewise; then it is certain, that no Society whatever ought to unchristian another, or declare it to be without the Pale of the Church, provided it retains the common Faith of Christ;---tho' it should differ from other Churches in a thousand lesser Matters. And it is upon this Catholic Principle, that the Church of *England* not only embraces as Fellow-Christians, her dissenting Brethren at Home, and in the Colonies, the Church of *Scotland*, and also the Protestant Churches Abroad, but also allows the Churches of *Greece*, *Russia*, and *Armenia*, and even the Church of *Rome* to be Parts and Members of the Universal, or Catholic Church of Christ. Indeed she looks upon the latter to be very corrupt: But nevertheless there is a wide Difference between a *Corrupt-Church*,

and *No-Church*. And the greatest Zealots among the Protestants that ever were, never yet proposed, as far as I can recollect, the baptizing of Converts made from the Church of *Rome*: Which yet they must have proposed, had they deemed the Papists to be *no Christians*.

BUT *Secondly*, if by *Terms of Communion* are to be understood the Terms or Rules of certain local Associations made for the better Celebration of Divine Worship, the Place, the Time, or Hour, and other Circumstances attending it, ---the different Liturgies, or Forms of Prayer, ---the various Rites, and Ceremonies required, and enjoined at various Times, and in different Countries, ---the peculiar Modes of Church-Discipline, and also the Terms required, or the Tests enjoined for guarding against false Doctrines, supposed to be in Danger of spreading in particular Places, and at particular Junctures:---I say, if these be the Things signified and intended by the Phrase, *Terms of Communion*;---then it is manifest, that not only independent States and Kingdoms, but also almost every separate Congregation may have some certain Terms of Communion peculiar to itself. And in that Case, as the Apostolical Rule is only general, viz. *Let every Thing be done decently, and in Order*, every independent Society, great or small, must make a particular
Applica-

Application of it to its own Case, and Circumstances.

BUT what are Individuals to do in the mean Time? Are they to conform to the Terms of Communion agreed upon, or acquiesced in by the Majority,---supposing they can comply with a *safe Conscience*? Or must the Majority conform to them? This, one would think, could not be made a serious Question of. And yet it is the very Point which hath agitated the Christian World in every Age and Country: Nay, it is the sole Foundation of the present Controversy. For the Majority have settled, or at least have acquiesced in the Settling of one Thing; and the Minority petition for another. The present Majority are many Millions of Souls; the Minority are so small a Number, that they themselves are ashamed to tell how many. And yet this very small Number are labouring hard to have the Terms of the *National Association* altered in their Favour: And if the great Majority will not consent, no Epithets are too bad for such wicked Men! Now this is an odd Kind of Struggle. And a Stranger to the *complaining* Genius of the *English* could imagine no less, from the doleful Complaints every Day uttered, but that these few unhappy Persons had either suffered all the Cruelties of a bloody Inquisition, or were now in the utmost Danger of

of losing their Lives, at least their Liberties, and Properties by this persecuting Majority. Great then would be his Surprise, when he should be informed how the Case actually stood.

“ GENTLEMEN : Doth this Majority, of which
 “ you so heavily complain, inflict any corporal
 “ Punishment, or levy any Fines or Penalties on
 “ you for not complying with their Terms of
 “ Association? *No.* Doth it refuse to acknow-
 “ ledge you to be their Christian Brethren at
 “ large, supposing you should separate from
 “ them, and erect some new Association of your
 “ own? *No, it doth not.* Doth it then deny
 “ you the Right and Privilege of Separation,
 “ by compelling you to continue Members of
 “ their Society, contrary to your own Judg-
 “ ments? *No, we have not that Objection to*
 “ *make : On the contrary, the Majority would not*
 “ *be displeased, were we to separate entirely from*
 “ *them : Which for certain Reasons of our own*
 “ *we do not chuse to do.* What then do you
 “ complain of? *The Ground of our Complaint is*
 “ *this, that the great Majority have a large na-*
 “ *tional Fund for the Payment of the Salaries of*
 “ *their Church Officers, and for other Uses, which*
 “ *we wish to enjoy, without complying with the*
 “ *Terms they require.* Well, Gentlemen, I have
 “ but one Question more to ask, and I have
 “ done : Is this national Fund, which you
 men-

" mention, their Property? Or is it yours?
 " *We cannot but own, That the national Fund*
 " *must be the Property of the national Majority :*
 " *Nevertheless we wish to be released from the*
 " *Terms they require, and yet to be as much Sharers*
 " *in, and Partakers of the Emoluments, as if we*
 " *had complied: And therefore we petition.—*
 " Now, Gentlemen, I clearly understand, what
 " you mean by complaining, that you are denied
 " the Rights of private Judgment :---And I
 " shall say no more."

STRANGE as this Conversation may appear, it is literally the Case; with this further Aggravation, That were the Complainers to erect a new Association, and were they to endow it ever so liberally,---the Majority (that is the Church of England) would not interfere with them in any Part of its Government, or in the Disposal of any of its Revenues. And therefore, after all the loud Clamours, which have been raised against imposing those *Terms of Communion*, which Christ and his Apostles did not impose ;---the Matter at last proves to be no more than this, *viz.* That the present national Church of England, as an independent Society, thinks herself invested with a Right of *judging for herself*, as to the Terms and Conditions, on which she shall form, or continue her own Association; allowing at the same Time, that all other Communities, whether at Home or
 Abroad,

Abroad, have the same Right: Nay, granting also, that even private Christians, if they find themselves obliged to renounce their former religious Connections, *thro' a Principle of Conscience*, may, and ought to act upon the same Plan of Christian Liberty. Now surely this is not the Language of Tyranny and Persecution---or if it be; if this, Sir, is to be called Popery, and Church-Bondage, tell me plainly and ingenuously, What is Protestantism! What is Freedom!

HOWEVER, I will allow, that you have your principal Attack yet to make; and that, like a skilful General, you reserve your choicest Troops 'till the last, in order to make one grand Effort, after every other hath miscarried. You therefore ask me, with an assumed Air of certain Victory, "Are there no *considerable* Faults in "the present Constitution of the Church of "England? Is it so perfect already in all its "Parts as to admit of no Improvement? And "will you, indeed *dare* you maintain, That "nothing can be altered for the better? No "Part be retrenched, reformed, or amended."

To all which I must beg Leave to answer by a like Demand; Is every goodly and magnificent Fabric to be pulled down, and laid level with the Ground, merely because it may happen
to

to have one, two, or three Rooms not so well proportioned, or so justly contrived as they might have been? And are we to set about demolishing the present venerable Structure, even before we know, what *Kind* of Building, or whether *any* Building is to be erected in its Place? The Scheme of your Petition to Parliament, as far as you have hitherto been pleased to unfold it, mentions no Plan, or Model whatever. And your general Principles, if you intend to adhere to them, cannot admit of a *permanent* Establishment of any Sort; because the building of any Thing up, instead of that which is to be pulled down, is, according to your Doctrine, the divesting Christians of that Liberty, wherewith Christ has made them free. This is really surprizing! Indeed it is alarming! For the Members of the national Church will hardly be persuaded (and they too have private Judgments as well as you) therefore they will hardly be persuaded, but that they have a Right to know what kind of Edifice you propose to rear up for them, if any at all, before you can, with Decency, ask their Consent to pull down the present. Produce therefore your own Plan, or Model; give us a Specimen of a new Creed, a new Confession, a new Liturgy, and of new Canons or Rules of Discipline, if you have any to produce; and after that, as you have freely, and severely exercised your private Judgement

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upon

upon ours, we ought to be allowed equal Liberty to scrutinize the Contents of yours. And then indeed, if, after a cool and deliberate Examination, it shall appear, that your Plan is well calculated to remove the present Blemishes and Mistakes, without *introducing others*, this will be a very great and just Recommendation of it.

IN the mean Time, I must observe, that as to the Faults, which may *truly* and *justly* be found in the present Doctrinal System of the Church of *England*, they are not many, nor are they of great Importance. At the Time of the Reformation, neither the Romanists, nor the Protestants understood the true Nature of *religious Merit*: And therefore the Papist reasoned dangerously, and the Protestant weakly about it. In the next Place, tho' the Protestants truly understood the general Grounds of our Justification before God, yet they expressed themselves so unhappily, and so incautiously, as to give some Advantage to their Adversaries. Honest *Cassander*, in his Letter to the Emperors *Ferdinand* and *Maximilian*, takes Notice of this Inaccuracy of Expression in the Protestants, and corrects the Mistake:---As likewise doth, in some Degree, our Second Homily on Salvation at the Close of it*.

* All these Points may probably appear at full Length in a set Treatise: The Materials of which the Author has had by him these many Years,

Moreover the Deference paid to *Bucer* and *Peter Martyr* (who came over to *England* instead of *Melancthon*, a Synergist and Anti-Predestinarian, the Person sent for, but who could not come.)

I say, the Deference paid to these learned Foreigners has occasioned some Kind of Inconsistency between the 17th Article, and the whole Body of the Common Prayer, together with the first Book of *Homilies* then extant. This 17th Article was probably formed at the Request of these two Professors, who were certainly Predestinarians; and whose Doctrines were therefore stigmatized by the Romanists with making God the Author of Sin, and that *omnia fata fieri*. But *Cranmer*, *Ridley*, *Latimer*, and *Hooper*, were not Predestinarians, as far as any Evidence positive, or negative can be traced concerning them: Nor were the Predestinarian Consequences objected by the * Papists to their

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Opi-

* I have here expressed myself incautiously. For this Paragraph has led some worthy Persons to conclude, that I meant to insinuate, That at the Breaking forth of the Reformation; the Church of *Rome* was wholly, or at least for the most Part, Anti-calvinistical with respect to the Predestinarian Doctrines: Whereas I intended no such Insinuation. And if my Words seemed to imply it; I retract them. My Opinion of the Matter is briefly this, That at the Time just preceding the Reformation, the Church of *Rome* held the Doctrine of absolute Decrees in the Sense of *St. Augustin*, *Peter Lombard*, *Thomas Aquinas*, *Duns Scotus*, and of the Schoolmen almost universally: But that when *Luther*, *Calvin*, *Zanchius*, *Peter Martyr*, *Bucer*, and others, came to express the same Doctrine in harsh Terms, without Art;
Ma.

Opinions at their respective Condemnations. Therefore, it is most probable that they were the Persons, especially *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, who not only inserted the 16th Article in Conformity to the Homily on *falling from God*, and in Opposition to the 17th,---but also prevented the wording of this 17th Article so strongly, as it easily might have been; nay, who proceeded so far as to annex a Clause to the Body of the Article, to invalidate, as it were, the preceding Part: So that, according to its present Form, and taking both Parts together, this 17th Article really concludes
nei-

Management, or Disguise, the Church of *Rome* recoiled at her own Tenets. And the Champions in her Cause did then, what many a Calvinist would do now, especially in the Heat of Controversy; that is, they charged their Adversaries with all the horrid Consequences, which result from this Doctrine, when crudely expressed, and inaccurately defined. *Luther's* Notions of the irresistible Decrees, which he afterwards published in his Book *de servo arbitrio*, shocked both Parties, and caused a Kind of Revolution on all Sides. The Papists raised an Outcry against their own Doctrine, when expressed in so unguarded a Manner: And the Saxon Divines, with *Melancthon* at their Head, silently withdrew themselves from their Master *Luther* in this Point, and struck out, or rather adopted another System, viz. The Synergistical. On this System of the Co-operation of Grace and Free-Will, the Augustan Confession is wholly built; as are also all the later Tracts of *Melancthon* relating to Grace and Justification. Now, it is observable, that in this famous Confession delivered to the Emperor *Charles V.* Anno 1530, there is no more Mention made of absolute Predestination, than if such a Doctrine had never been broached. And as the Augustan Confession was the very Mother of, and the Model for, the Protestant Church of *England* in the Reign of *Edward* the Sixth,---it is equally observable, That in the first Book of
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neither the one Way, nor the other ;--excepting, that it strongly supposes the Prescience and Providence of God, which both *Calvinists* and *Arminians* concur in maintaining. There is likewise a Mistake in the Title of one of the Articles: And a like Mistake of the Name of an Homily mentioned in another: And there are some other Marks of Hurry and Precipitation. As to the Athanasian Creed, it is really superfluous in our present Service; because the very same Doctrine is as strongly, tho' not so scholastically maintained in the Nicene Creed, the Litany, and

Homilies, and the Book of Common Prayer, (which were both compiled before the Articles, and before the coming in of *Bucer* and *Peter Martyr*) there is the same profound Silence about absolute Predestination, as there was in the Confession of *Augsburg*. In short, had *Bucer* and *Peter Martyr* never set foot in *England*, it is most probable that the 17th Article had never appeared as a Part of the *English* Ecclesiastical Constitution. This I thought necessary to say for the Sake of satisfying some Friends of acute Discernment; and particularly for clearing up a Point to a learned and judicious Observer, with whose anonymous Letter, addressed to Mr. *Becket*, Bookseller, in the *Strand*, and dated *March* 14, 1772, I have been favoured. It seems by the Turn of the Stile, that I was formerly well acquainted with this Gentleman: For he says, "The Dean has long known my Sentiments, and I his. We differ in some Things; but agree, that the National Establishment is worthy of being *improved*, but not *destroyed*." I am truly unhappy, that I cannot recollect who this worthy and learned Person is; and therefore intreat it of him as a particular Favour, to honour me with a direct and personal Correspondence; having some Papers of Consequence, which I wish to submit to his Inspection, before they are presented to the Public.

in many other Parts of our public Offices : And as the damnatory Clauses are seldom rightly understood, and therefore too liable to give Offence, it were to be wished that the whole was omitted. Indeed there is another weighty Reason for leaving this Creed out of our present Forms of public Worship, which, as it is perfectly sound and orthodox, ought to be distinctly mentioned. The Reason I mean is this ; one principal Part of the Controversy, which gave Birth to the Athanasian Creed, is now generally and very happily forgot, *viz.* the Errors of *Sabellius* ;---there being few at this Day that ever heard of his Name, and fewer still, who have a clear Conception of his singular Notions and Opinions. And yet the Creed itself can never be properly understood, 'till these Tenets, by being previously known, are contrasted with their opposite Extremes. For all those striking Antitheses, which to ignorant, or to prejudiced Minds appear like so many Paradoxes or Contradictions, will be found to be nothing more, when truly understood, than so many Cautions or Preservatives against falling into the Errors of *Sabellius* on one Side, or into those of *Arius* on the other. Now as the Nicene Creed was particularly intended as an Antidote against *Arianism*,---and as *Sabellianism* is utterly unknown to our common Congregations, Reason good it seems to be, that a Creed which was intended

tended to guard against both Extremes at the same Time, and by the same Context, ought to be laid aside, when there is only one of these Errors now remaining;---especially as that one is already as well guarded against as human Prudence can devise. For undoubted fact it is, that *that Arian*, whose Conscience can digest the Nicene Creed, will make no Scruples at swallowing the Athanasian. Lastly, we will also allow, that the great Principles both of natural and revealed Religion, might have been expressed in a more methodical Manner, and with greater Precision, than they are expressed in our present Thirty-nine Articles:---Also, that a new Set of first Lessons might have been more judiciously chosen out of the Old Testament than the present are:---That some useful Abbreviations might be made in our Liturgy; and some Expressions altered and amended. All these Things every candid, and impartial Man will readily allow; and he would be glad to lend an helping Hand, as far as his Abilities and Influence extended, towards removing these few real Blemishes, Spots, and Imperfections, when a proper Opportunity shall offer.

BUT nevertheless, be it duly, and solemnly observed, that IMPROVING,---and DESTROYING, are very different Things: And that the Man or the Set of Men, who would gladly engage in
the

the one, would not wish to appear to give the least Countenance to the other. Therefore such Men will chearfully submit to the present Inconveniences, were they greater than they are, rather than be the Co-adjutors, and Fellow-Labourers, in such a destructive Design as yours seems to be.

As to the Case of those young Gentlemen, who are to be matriculated in our two Universities of *Oxford*, and *Cambridge*, and also of all Persons commencing Graduates, either in Arts, Law, Physic, or Music;---there doth not appear any strict Propriety, in the Reason of Things, for requiring their Subscriptions. And therefore, were they to be permitted to be on the same Footing with the rest of our Lay-Congregations, or with the Members of Universities in *other Countries*, I do not see, I must ingenuously confess, any Danger that would attend their Non-Subscribing. Consequently, as some of them wish to be delivered from an Injunction which they say is grievous to them, and which I allow is not necessary;--Let them in the Name of Charity, and Good-Will,---and more especially let the Ministers of dissenting Congregations, if they will chuse to apply, be heartily * wished a good Deliverance from the Burden of our Subscriptions.

BUT

* The Author repeats his Wishes in this Respect, if the Dissenting Clergy shall again think proper to apply. What further

BUT to return: You tell us in your circular printed Paper, " That the Liberty of judging for yourself with Respect to the Sense of Scripture, is one of those Possessions, which you have a Right to enjoy, as a Member of a Protestant State ;---a Possession which the first and most venerable of our Reformers claimed as the unalienable Property of Christians, in Opposition to the Tyranny, and Bigotry of *Rome* ;---a Privilege, which cannot with Justice be circumscribed by any Jurisdiction upon Earth, by whatever Name such Jurisdiction is distinguished or defined."

Now, Sir, I must observe, that there is a Sense in which every Part of this Paragraph is very just and true, as hath been already set forth in this Treatise, see Pages 28 and 29; and there is also a Sense in which some Parts of it are very false. Therefore the Question is, In which of these Senses did you intend the whole Paragraph to be understood? And I cannot do the Cause of Truth a greater Service, than by bringing the Matter to the following Test. The

further he has to say on this Subject, as also on the 20th Article, and on the original Doctrines of the Church of *England*, as settled by the *first* Reformers, will soon appear in his Letters to the Rev. Dr. *Kippis*; which are preparing for the Press.

Apostle St. Peter strictly enjoins all Christians, and *a fortiori* all those, who either are, or are to be dedicated and set apart for the Instruction of other Christians, to be ready to give an Answer to every Man, that asketh a Reason of the Hope that is in them. Now the Bishop at an episcopal Ordination, or the Presbyters at a Presbyteral, or the Elders at a Congregational Dedication (for I do not confine the Argument to the Church of England, but would make it the common Cause of all Christian Societies, and therefore I say in general, the Elders in the Church at the Time of your Dedication to the Ministry) put certain Questions to you *in Writing*;---suppose 39, or 19, or 9, it matters not, concerning your Faith in Christ, and the Reasons or Grounds of your Hope:---What *written* Answers will you return to these *written* Questions? Will you say, That as you have the Liberty of judging for yourself, they have no Right to put any Questions to you? This, I think, is too much even for the boldest Confessionalist to advance. Will you then enter a Protest before you shall give in your Answers, *viz.* That tho' your Elders should not approve of these Answers,---nay, tho' they should think your Opinions to be very *unscriptural*, and yourself to be *unfit* to be admitted into the Pastoral Office; yet they ought to admit you to be an Overseer, and a Shepherd of the Flock of Christ;
or

or if once admitted, they ought never to turn you out on Account of any Heterodox Opinions,---because the Liberty of judging for yourself with respect to the Sense of Scriptures, and consequently of changing your Opinions as often as you please, is a privilege, which cannot with Justice be circumscribed by any Jurisdiction upon Earth?---This indeed is the Tenor of your general Arguments; and it is, what you seem to be very much inclined to maintain, as an invariable Maxim: And yet I cannot persuade myself, that any of you will be so much off your Guard, as to make an open Declaration of it in express Terms.

IN one Word, if you will allow, that either Pastors, or People, or both together have a Right to enquire into your Sense of Scripture, as a public Teacher, and either not to admit you at first to the pastoral Office;---or to remove you from it, in Case they shall judge you to be unworthy, on Account of your broaching such Opinions, as they think to be unscriptural, and dangerous;---the Dispute is *so far* at an End, and we are both agreed. But if you will insist, that they cannot be justified in removing you, *in such a Case*, from being a public Teacher, and Instructor in their Congregations and Places of Worship,---tho' they allow you the full Liberty of setting up any religious Assembly of your own elsewhere: You will

then exercise your private Judgement on the Ruin and Destruction of the Rights of the private Judgment of other Men : And you will commence in Fact, whether you intended it, or not, one of the most unreasonable Tyrants that ever existed in the Church.

BUT hoping better Things from the Goodness of your Heart to correct the evil Tendency of your Principles ; and believing also, that in acting as a professed Advocate for the Liberty of your own private Judgment, you have no settled Design, or professed Intentions of invading the Rights of others,

I remain,

REVEREND SIR,

With due Esteem, &c.



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ONE Thing, which I am told you and your Friends greatly, and particularly insist on, hath entirely escaped my Notice. Indeed I cannot say, that I did not read the Paragraph in your circular Paper: But in reading it, I thought the Proposal so very weak, and inconsistent with itself, that I could not persuade myself, you laid any Stress upon it. However, as I am now informed that I was much mistaken, and that you make it the Sheet-Anchor of your Cause, I beg Pardon for the Omission, and shall therefore endeavour to bestow that Attention on it, which you imagine it so well deserves.

THE Passage is this, " With Respect to Subscription to the Liturgy, we cannot but lament, that the Legislature should think proper
 " to

“ to continue the Requisition of a subscribed
 “ Approbation of a Form of Worship, the Use
 “ of which is established by PENALTIES,
 “ which *must* sufficiently ensure the OBEDIENCE
 “ of the Parties concerned. Penalties, and not
 “ Subscriptions, surely constitute the proper
 “ Sanction of a Law.”

Now here, Sir, we are at a Loss to know the precise Point you are aiming at: Because there is one Meaning, in which this Passage may be understood, which we cannot well ascribe to you, it being inconsistent with all your other Principles, and avowed Declarations:---And there is another Meaning, which, in Tenderness to your Character, we are unwilling to impute to you.

It is utterly inconsistent with your known Sentiments of Liberty to suppose, that you would recommend PENALTIES to enforce *Obedience* in Matters of *Religion*. And you, who have the most dreadful Apprehensions of a *political Christianity*, should have been the last Person to have given the Preference, as here you do, to Sanctions merely political. Besides, suppose the State had not been Christian, (a Supposition which some of your Friends, and Admirers would gladly make; and you yourself

self seem to wish, that the State remained entirely Neuter) there would then be an End of penal Sanctions to enforce *any Kind* of Christian Worship. But must we therefore, in such a Case, be absolutely deprived of any Liturgy at all? And would it be any *Crime* against the State, or any *Sin* against God, if religious and well disposed Persons associated together, and first expressed their Consent *to*, and afterwards subscribed their Approbation *of* some common Form of Public Prayer? Surely no: And I am the bolder in making this Declaration, because I have your own Example to countenance it in another Case. For you, the Petitioners, have yourselves associated together: And you stile yourselves in this very Paper, the *Associated Members*. Nay, you likewise declare, that you have entered into, and subscribed a *Bond* of Association. Now, Sir, why might not we do the like in our Case, which you do in yours? And why might not our Subscriptions to the Liturgy be stiled our Bond of Association?---It is really hard, that we should be debarred a Privilege, which you so freely exercise; and which you would think the greatest Injustice to be deprived of. Nor indeed is there any other Tye, merely religious; but this of a voluntary Association, or a voluntary Subscription to be proposed;---all penal Sanc-

tions being in themselves foreign to Religion, *as such*, and never to be used but on some Civil Account,

BUT indeed I need not labour this Point with You: For you certainly are as little an Advocate for penal Laws to compel persons to make Use of a Liturgy against their Wills, as you are for Subscriptions to express their Approbation of it against their Judgments. And therefore there must be some *latent* Reason for acting a Part so inconsistent with yourself, and with your known Character;---which Reason I shall endeavour to investigate by and by. In the mean Time as you are pleased to remark, that Penalties and not Subscriptions constitute the proper Sanctions of a Law, I will join Issue with you on that Footing; and in consequence thereof, will attempt to shew (what you have chosen to omit) the *justifiable* Reasons for introducing penal Laws into this national Association of Religion.

WHEN the Revenues of the *Popish* Church escheated to the State, by the Abolition of Popery, a Part of them were again regranted, or might be considered as regranted for the Establishment of a Protestant Church, and the Maintenance

nance of its Ministers; therefore those who now enlist themselves the Ministers of this Protestant Church, are in Fact enlisted in the Service of the Public;---and they do thereby virtually contract with the State to perform that Duty which the State requires. Now the Duty here required is to make Use of a certain Liturgy, or Form of Common Prayer in the Celebration of public Worship: The Approbation of which Liturgy, or Form had been expressed before by Subscription. Here then, Penal Sanctions very properly come in;---for the Legislature doth not require you to *approve*; but if you do approve, it requires you to *use*. And in such a Case, the State hath certainly a just Right to compel you to do that Duty, and to perform those Offices, to which you have consented, and for which you are *paid*.---Either therefore renounce the *Pay*, or perform the *Service*. And here again, if this Alternative is to be branded with the Name of Persecution;---May such a Persecution always be entailed upon us!

— I am much afraid, Reverend Sir, that you would not say an hearty *Amen*, to this short Prayer. And yet you yourself are pleased to say, or rather *insinuate*, (for you take Care not to say so much in exprefs Terms) that you would be content to suffer the Penalties for not using

a Liturgy, which you disapprove,---provided the Subscriptions of Approbation were removed. Astonishing! you cannot really mean any such Thing.---And were Prosecutions to be commenced, and Penalties to be levied upon you for not conforming to the Use of a Liturgy, to the Approbation of which you had never subscribed, you would be the first Person to exclaim against such a tyrannical Exertion of the Civil Power. Nay, you would urge that very Omission of Subscribing, as a Proof of the shocking Injustice of passing any Sentence against you. What then can this double dealing mean? And to what End or Motive are we to attribute the Appearance of so much Art and Cunning?

——SORRY I am to say, that after casting about for every charitable Construction, I am forced at last to acquiesce in the following blunt Account, given by a Man of some Penetration, who paraphrases your Words, and gives your Meaning after the following Manner.

“LET these silly People who call themselves
 “Orthodox, or *Right-thinkers*, be first gull-
 “ed out of their Subscriptions of Approba-
 “tion under some Pretence or other: Be-
 “cause nothing can be done, till this is ac-
 “complished

“ completed,---it being reckoned base and scan-
 “ dalous for a Man to renounce his own Sub-
 “ scription, unless he will renounce his Prefer-
 “ ment at the same Time;---which none of us
 “ intend to do. Therefore, while these Sub-
 “ scriptions remain, they are a Clog, and a dead
 “ Weight upon us: They hurt our Charac-
 “ ters,---they prevent many from declaring
 “ in our Favour,---and they stop our own
 “ Mouths to a great Degree, against crying
 “ out, Persecution! For the short Reply is,
 “ *Why then did you subscribe? Or why do you*
 “ *not renounce the Preferments which you hold*
 “ *by Virtue of your Subscriptions?*---At all Events
 “ therefore let us get rid of Subscriptions: But
 “ let us not sound an Alarm at first, least our
 “ Plot should be discovered. Consequently
 “ while we are petitioning to be freed from
 “ Subscriptions, let us *seem* to be content, that
 “ all penal Sanctions should remain. Indeed we
 “ may the more readily acquiesce in this Point,
 “ because when the one is removed, the other
 “ will become a mere *brutum fulmen*. For it
 “ is idle to think of enforcing any of these Pe-
 “ nalties in such a Country as ours, and ac-
 “ cording to the present Disposition of its In-
 “ habitants. Besides, who is to inform, or
 “ rather who dares to incur the odious Name
 “ of an *Informers*? And even were an Infor-
 “ mation

“ mation to be lodged, who is to carry on
 “ the various Prosecutions against us? Or who
 “ would charge himself with the Trouble,
 “ and the vast Expence?--Not to mention, that
 “ if we lustily cried out Fire! Faggot! and
 “ Persecution! which we should have a much
 “ better Pretence for doing than we had before,
 “ we should be sure of gaining all the Mob,
 “ and all the News-papers on our Side. And
 “ then we need not fear even the 36th Canon,
 “ and all the Censures of the Ecclesiastical
 “ Courts. For as it would be in our Power to
 “ stop Proceedings, by Means of a Prohibi-
 “ tion;---and as our Benefices are Freeholds,
 “ and Matters of civil Property, an *English*
 “ Jury, well warmed by patriotic News-papers,
 “ and by the patriotic Harangues of the Coun-
 “ cil in Favour of the glorious Cause of Li-
 “ berty,---the Protestant Religion,---the Rights
 “ of private Judgment,---the Rights of *En-*
 “ *glishmen*,---and of *Magna Charta*,---will cer-
 “ tainly determine in our Favour; so that if
 “ we can once get off these galling Fetters of
 “ Subscriptions, *the Day is our own.*”

Now, Sir, whether this Man reasoned right
 or wrong, your own Conscience best can
 tell. But certain it is, that you ought to give
 some consistent Account for this very incon-
 sistent Part of your Conduct, or else admit,
 that

that there is too much **Truth** in this Representation of it. Indeed we ourselves are not so blind, but that we plainly foresee the fatal Consequences, which would attend such a Plan as yours. One Clergyman would read one Part of the Service, and another would read another, and both perhaps would add something peculiar of their own; whereas a third might read no Part at all, but launch out into extempore Effusions. Some would mangle and curtail the Service thro' one Motive and some thro' another; and the Passions, and Prejudices of all would be greatly enflamed, and be let loose to do what Mischiefs they pleased. By this Means the serious and rational Part of our Congregations would be sorely hurt, and scandalized;---the warm, the bigotted, or enthusiastic would be split into Sects and furious Factions;---Priest would be set up against Priest,---Parish against Parish,---or one Part of the Parishoners against another, whilst the Indifferent, the Irreligious, and Profane, would divert themselves with making Sport of all. In short, the present Church of *England*, which without any Compliment to ourselves, (tho' in one of your Tracts you are pleased to call it a Self-Compliment) and according to the united Judgment of all foreign Churches, is the Glory, and the Bulwark of
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the Protestant Religion, would then become its Scandal and Disgrace. And if ever Popery shall be able to make any Advances among us, it must be by such Means as these. For People would at last grow fatiated and tired with our perpetual Wranglings, Disputes, and Divisions, and they would therefore fly to the Church of *Rome*, as to an Asylum, which promised them never failing Repose, and Safety.

F I N I S.



